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ABSTRACT

A social organizational theory is outlined, and how types of data drawn from it may be useful in an evaluation context is indicated. Anthropological ethnography is proposed as a more powerful tool in those evaluations undertaken from a phenomenological perspective. Naturalistic/qualitative evaluation lacks a theoretical perspective on how groups of persons order their social lives. The constitutive ethnographic theory of social organization is explained. This theory is presented to provide a link between the phenomenological perspective and the field method of anthropological ethnography. Ethnographic evaluation inquiry allocates resources such that ethnographic observation takes precedence over interviewing. Interviews are primarily used as guides to observation. Constitutive ethnographers believe that group members display their sociocultural standards in interaction. They seek patterns of co-occurrence among phenomena. The program's definition and boundaries are studied as problematic. Inquiry is centered on interactional events. (DWH)

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METHODOLOGY PROJECT

# ETHNOGRAPHY AND EVALUATION: THE GOODNESS OF FIT

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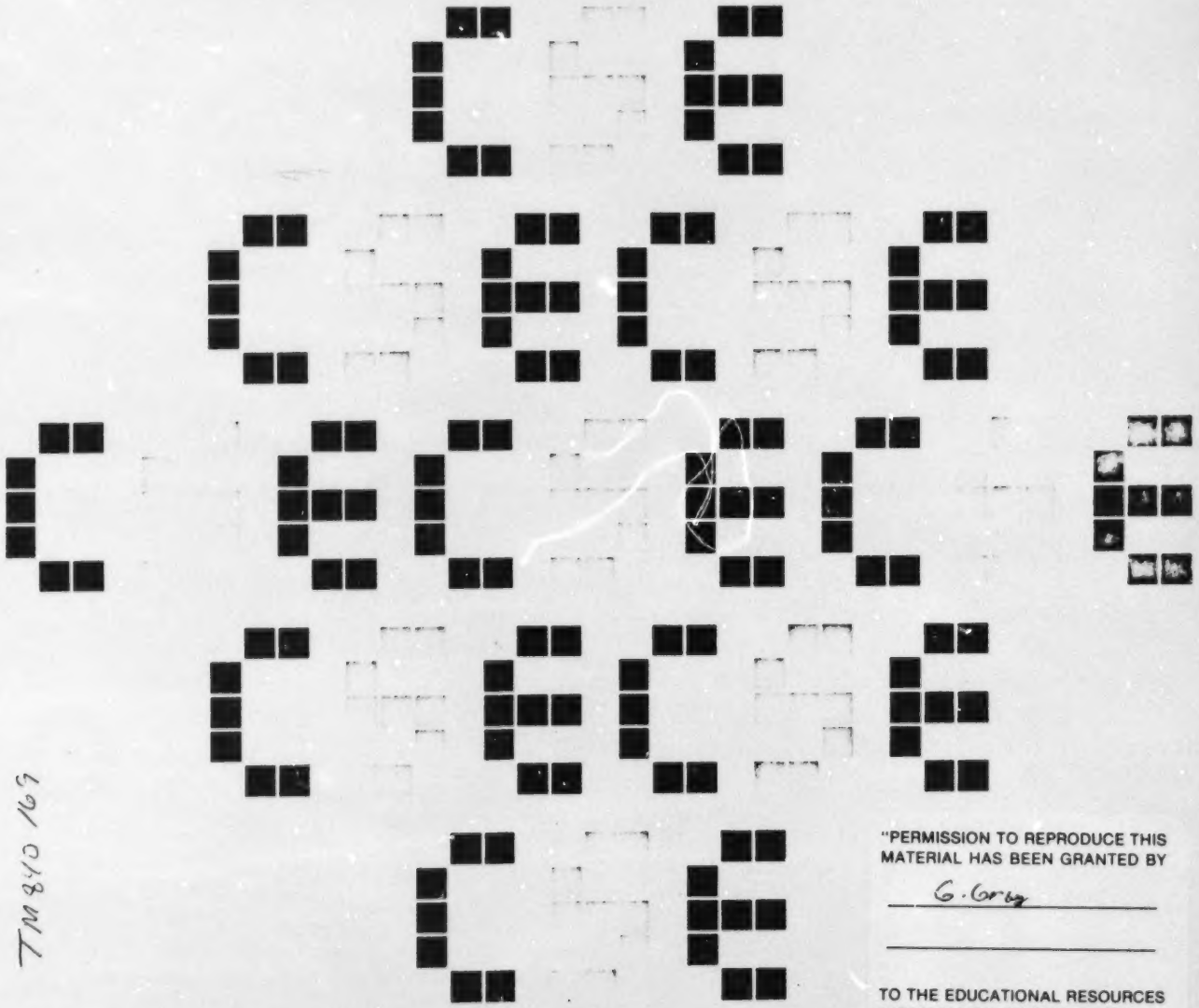

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# ETHNOGRAPHY AND EVALUATION: THE GOODNESS OF FIT

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## Introduction

Through the last decade or so, the purposes and assumptions of evaluation have been repeatedly re-examined, expanded and clarified. New models of evaluation have been proposed. The functions and methods of evaluation have been extended and diversified. Largely as a consequence of these developments, there has been in educational evaluation, as in educational research generally (Rist, 1980), expanding interest in and use of qualitative field research. Writing on the uses of "naturalistic inquiry" and "qualitative methods" in evaluation has increased markedly in the past five years (e.g., Guba, 1978; Hamilton and others, 1978; House, 1977; Patton, 1980). Evaluation models based explicitly on naturalistic paradigms have been introduced. (See, for example, Guba and Lincoln, 1981; and Parlett and Hamilton, 1976.) Federal and state education agencies have come to call regularly for field research or case study components in the program evaluations and policy studies for which they contract (c.f., Herriott & Firestone, 1982). Evaluators in school districts have begun to seek the assistance of trained field researchers both in conducting evaluations and training district personnel (e.g., Dorr-Bremme, 1981a, 1981b). The general trend is well-exemplified in the recent advice of Cronbach and his associates (1980:223):

> The evaluator will be wise not to declare allegiance to either a quantitative-manipulative-summative methodology or a qualitative-naturalistic-descriptive methodology. He can draw on both styles at appropriate times and in appropriate amounts. Those who advocate an evaluation plan devoid of one kind of information or the other carry the burden of justifying the exclusion.

Patton's (1980:17) Qualitative Evaluation Methods begins from virtually the same position:

> Today's evaluator must be sophisticated about matching research methods to the nuances of particular evaluation questions and the idiosyncracies of specific decision maker needs.

Thus, in a field long wedded to experimental and quasi-experimental modes of inquiry, naturalistic/qualitative approaches have won broad acceptance.

The status in evaluation of anthropologically and sociologically based ethnographic fieldwork, however, is far less clear. Little has been written on ethnography per se by those in the evaluation community. Indeed, the precise nature of the relationships between "naturalistic inquiry" or "qualitative methods" and ethnographic research have yet to be explicated in evaluation texts. For many in the field, these terms and others --case study approach, fieldwork, etc.-- have come to function virtually as synonyms. Evaluation methodologists have not advocated doing ethnography; rather, they have recommended a method of field study which they see as derived from the ethnographic tradition in anthropology (c.f., Guba, 1978:21; Patton, 1980:44). In evaluation practice, field research as traditionally done by anthropologists has most often been substantially adapted in purpose and method--apparently in response to clients' concerns for generalizability and reliability and to "the requirements of relevance, timeliness, and utility of the policy arena" (Herriott and Firestone, 1982:37). And even when evaluation designs have included ethnographic fieldwork as such, the ethnographers in the field have found that they face numerous pressures to depart from the theory-based inquiry principles of

anthropological ethnography (Colfer, 1976; Firestone, 1975; Herriott, 1977). Thus, conceptual distinctions between anthropological ethnography and other modes of qualitative field study have been inadvertantly blurred in the field of evaluation; and simultaneously, the role that ethnographic inquiry can and should play in evaluation has gone incompletely explored.

In this context, two questions in particular deserve exploration:

(1) What makes qualitative field research ethnographic? That is, what differentiates ethnographic inquiry in particular from naturalistic or qualitative inquiry in general?

(2) What can ethnographic fieldwork contribute to an evaluation that other forms of qualitative investigation cannot?

I address each of these questions in turn below. In so doing, I argue that what is unique about ethnography is its orientation to culture and related constructs that define the nature of social organization. These constructs, taken collectively as a theory of social organization, serve as the basis for organizing and carrying out ethnographic fieldwork. In the absence of some such theory of social organization, I maintain, qualitative research fails to fulfill its potential: its descriptive validity (Erickson, 1978) is jeopardized. As I elaborate this argument, I sketch out a social organizational theory and indicate how the kinds of data that follows from it can be useful in an evaluation context.

## Similarities And Differences In Naturalistic/Qualitative Inquiry And Ethnography

### Some Similarities

Most methodologists maintain that naturalistic inquiry or qualitative research (which I use here as alternative labels) and ethnographic fieldwork are not one and the same. Especially among writers in the field of evaluation, the prevailing view seems to be that anthropological ethnography is one of the principle foundations of naturalistic/qualitative inquiry. This viewpoint is evident in two of the most comprehensive treatments of naturalistic/qualitative evaluation inquiry, Egon Guba's (1978) Toward A Methodology of Naturalistic Inquiry in Educational Evaluation and Michael Patton's (1980) Qualitative Evaluation Methods. Guba (1978:18ff.), for example, sees Glaser and Strauss's (1967) grounded theory , Barker's (1968) ecological psychology, Bronfenbrenner's (1976, 1977) ecological experimentation and "educational anthropology/ethnography" as methodologically "similar" to naturalistic inquiry. Discussing the relationship of the last two, he says:

> One of the roots of naturalistic inquiry is deeply buried in its precursor fields of anthropology-ethnography. That these two fields should currently be displaying a good deal of vigor in the educational R & D community should therefore come as no surprise ...it is apparent that a vital field [educational anthropology-ethnography] is emerging, one which on principle is closely allied to the tenets of naturalistic inquiry (Guba, 1978:21).

Patton (1980:44), explaining "the roots of a qualitative research strategy," writes in a similar vein:

> This comprehensive strategy of qualitative methods is derived from a variety of philosophical, epistemological, and methodological traditions. Qualitative methods are derived most directly from the ethnographic and field study traditions of anthropology and sociology. More generally, the holistic-inductive paradigm of naturalistic inquiry is based on perspectives in phenomenology, symbolic interactionism and naturalistic behaviorism, ethnomethodology, and ecological psychology (citations omitted).

These statements suggest that, while naturalistic/qualitative inquiry and ethnographic research are not identical, they are at least similar in method. In fact, however, it is impossible to distinguish any substantial methodological differences between the former and the latter in the writing of Guba, Patton, or most other evaluation methodologists who have addressed the subject.* Thus, the following description of the naturalistic-qualitative approach to inquiry, derived largely from the work of Guba and Patton, is equally applicable to ethnography.

The essence of naturalistic/qualitative inquiry, from most points of view, is the examination of phenomena in their naturally occuring contexts (c.f. Guba, 1978:12; Patton, 1980:41ff.; Willems and Rausch, 1969:3). Guba and Lincoln (1981:78-80) note that while the experimental researcher endeavors to constrain and control certain "antecedent variables" and

* I refer explicitly to the writing of evaluation methodologists for two reasons: (1) it is naturalistic or qualitative inquiry as defined within the field of evaluation that is of foremost concern here; and (2) so far as I know, methodologists in the fields of anthropology or sociology (the other disciplines of concern here, those most qualified to comment on the ethnographic research as such) have not written at all on the relationship between ethnography and naturalistic or qualitative research.

possible "outputs," allowing only selected behaviors to vary in experimentally salient ways, the naturalist strives to minimize the extent to which both antecedent conditions and behavioral outputs are influenced by the research act. According to Guba (1978:13), then,:

> The naturalistic investigator...begins as an anthropologist might begin learning about a strange culture, by immersing himself in the investigation with as open a mind as possible, and permitting impressions to emerge...Essentially the naturalistic inquirer's model is ethnography. In a more contemporary vein, the naturalist might claim his model to be investigative journalism, in which "truth" can be elicited from partial and even reluctant

As this should suggest, naturalistic/qualitative inquiry is holistic (Guba, 1978:13-14). It strives to describe and explain phenomena -- situations, events, programs-- as wholes, paying attention to the contexts in which activities occur. As Patton (1980:40) puts it:

> In contrast to experimental designs which manipulate and measure the relationships among a few carefully selected and narrowly defined variables, the holistic approach to research design is open to gathering data on any number of aspects of the setting under study in order to put together a complete picture of the social dynamic of a particular situation or program.

Naturalistic/qualitative inquiry is also <u>inductive</u> in approach (Guba, 1978:14; House, 1977; Patton, 1980:40-41). It does not proceed from a small set of pre-specified variables and a proposition about their relationships, i.e., an hypothesis or a conceptual framework. Rather, naturalistic/qualitative inquiry proceeds from some broad general questions which are refined and increasingly specified as the researcher observes and interacts with persons in the setting under study. At the same time, key

dimensions along which the data will be analyzed emerge as the case or cases under study are examined.

But while naturalistic/qualitative inquiry is inductive in its overall design, it includes both expansionist (or divergent) and reductionist (or convergent) phases (Guba, 1978:7; Patton, 1980:46). That is, the naturalistic/qualitative researcher or evaluator engages in a reiterated cycle of inquiry steps that consist of (a) gathering data on site, (b) analyzing and reflecting upon those data, (c) posing new (usually more specific) questions and hunches to guide continuing inquiry, and (d) returning to the site(s) under study for further data collection. Thus, there are moments during inquiry when the investigator is broadening the inquiry with new or re-formulated questions and hunches and moments when the investigator is focusing the inquiry in order to address questions and/or to confirm or disconfirm hunches.

It follows from all the above that the researcher him- or herself is the primary instrument of data collection in naturalistic/qualitative inquiry. It is as the researcher or evaluator participates in the setting under study, observing and experiencing daily life comprehensively, that the he or she arrives inductively at a holistic understanding and portrayal of the social phenomena of interest.

As I noted earlier, all of the above are also routinely listed as characteristics of anthropological ethnography. That anthroethnography (Spindler, 1982:3) is directed toward the study of phenomena in their naturally occuring contexts is well known, as Guba himself points out. And

as Pelto and Pelto (1978:286) have noted, "one of the most pervasive features of anthropological culture is the general commitment to holism." (See also Dobbert, 1982:5-8; Mehan, 1982:59ff.) Ethnographers also see their mode of inquiry as generally inductive, with divergent and convergent phases. Hymes (1982:24) had these features of ethnography in mind when he wrote:

> For many ethnographers, it is of the essence of the method that it is a dialectical, or feedback (or interactive-adaptive) method. It is of the essence of the method that initial questions may change during the course of inquiry...an essential characteristic of ethnography is that it is open-ended, subject to self-correction during the process of inquiry itself.

Another element of the inductive approach has been emphasized by Mehan (1982:62):

> Categories imported to the setting from the outside are avoided. Instead, the goal of ethnographic research is to allow the reality of the situation to impinge on the investigator's subjectivity until the categories for description are determined by the scene itself.

And finally, echoing another point made earlier about naturalistic-qualitative inquiry, Dobbert (1982:5) asserts that one "truth about the basic characteristics of [anthropological ethnography] is that the anthropologist's entire person is used as the primary instrument of research."

It should be evident from the description and citations above that the general methodological principles of naturalistic/qualitative inquiry in general and of anthroethnographic fieldwork in particular are virtually identical. Furthermore, the two also have a common, philsophical

foundation: a phenomenological perspective. To describe this perspective, both Guba and Patton cite Bogdan and Taylor's (1975:2) Introduction to Qualitative Research:

> Two major theoretical perspectives have dominated the social science scene. One, positivism, traces its origins to the great social theorists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and especially to Auguste Comte and Emile Durkheim. The positivist seeks the facts or causes of social phenomena with little regard for the subjective states of individuals. Durkheim advised the social scientist to consider "social facts," or social phenomena, as "things" that exercise an external and coercive force on human behavior.
> The second theoretical perspective, which, following the lead of Irwin Deutscher, we will describe as phenomenological, stems most prominently from Max Weber. The phenomenologist is concerned with understanding human behavior from the actor's own frame of Since the positivists and the phenomenologists approach different problems and seek different answers, their research will typically demand different methodologies (quoted in Guba, 1978:11-12; and in Patton, 1980:45; italics in the original).

Both authors go on to explain what the phenomenological orientation, as defined here, implies for naturalistic/qualitative inquiry. They point out that the naturalistic investigator is interested in the meaning of behavior for participants in the setting under study (Patton, 1980:44-45). While conventional, quantitatively oriented inquiry seeks a single reality --that which is verifable as "fact" through the operations of experimental or quasi-experimental research-- naturalistic or qualitative inquiry seeks and expects to find many realities:

> the reality with which the naturalistic inquirer must deal exists only in the mind of individual people and depends heavily on their separate perceptions. It is not surprising that their views of reality should differ (Guba, 1978:15).

Elsewhere, Guba and Lincoln (1981:133) cite Erving Goffman's (1961) comment that "any group of persons...develop [sic] a life of their own that becomes meaningful, reasonable, and normal once you get close to it," adding that:

> It is the totality of this meaning, reasonableness, and normalcy in each context and setting that the naturalistic inquirer seeks to understand, to explain, and to describe.

Taken as stated, the latter is a goal with which nearly all anthropologists engaged in doing ethnography could readily share. They, too, take a primary interest in the world as experienced and understood by members of the group that they are studying. Indeed, "for ethnographic inquiry, validity is commonly dependent on an accurate knowledge of the meanings of behaviors and institutions to those who participate in them" (Hymes, 1982:25; and c.f., Erickson, 1978; Pelto and Pelto, 1978:60ff.; Pike, 1967; and Mehan, 1982).

To summarize, naturalistic/qualitative inquiry and anthropological ethnographic inquiry share both a philsophical base (the phenomenological perspective) and a body of methodological principles. Both entail the holistic, inductive (or dialectical, or responsive-adaptive) study of phenomena in their naturally occuring contexts. Both place emphasis upon the investigator as the primary instrument of data collection, immersing him- or herself in the setting under study and attending to social realities as they are understood and experienced by participants in that setting.

A Fundamental Difference

Despite their several similarities, however, anthropological ethnography and naturalistic/qualitative inquiry are not identical. The

latter is a generic label for an approach to inquiry; it is a body of metaphysical and epistemological assumptions with an allied mode of inquiry which, like the experimental paradigm, is separate from any disciplinary conceptual structure. As such, the naturalistic or qualitative paradigm in itself entails no conceptual system to elaborate its phenemological philosophic stance; it presents no theory of the general nature of organized human social life as it is carried out and experienced by those under study. Anthropological ethnography, on the other hand, provides theory of this type --theory which is grounded in empirical studies of culture and cultural process. And therein lies the principle difference between it and naturalistic-qualitative inquiry in general.

This difference, I maintain, is an extremely significant one; for, as Erickson (1978:1) has convincingly argued, "...narrative description of social relations always contains within itself a theory of the social events it describes; [thus] no description is mere description:"

> the theory entailed in a description of a connected sequence of events across time is in essence a theory of its social organization...While descriptions may or may not also entail theories of psychic processes within individuals--theories of motivation, temperament, learning or cognitive stage--descriptions of events involving the actions of more than one individual, I maintain, always entail theory about the organization of social relations.

This is true even when inquiry does not proceed from an explicit, pre-specified, conceptual model of the educational program or other body of human activity under study. Why? In order to produce a description of a program (which is at least in part what naturalistic/qualitative evaluation

inquiry purports to do), the naturalistic evaluator must make decisions about when and what to observe, about what to ask of whom and how to ask it. He or she must also make choices about which of all the phenomena co-occuring from moment to moment in the scenes chosen for observation to note down or otherwise document. Similarly, he or she must select which remarks, among all of those that occur in casual conversations on site as well as in formal interviews, to attend to and record. And as inquiry proceeds the evaluator must select which behavior, terminology, etc. he/she can safely treat as unproblematic, its purposes and/or meaning understood, and which he/she should treat as problematic, its purposes and/or meaning requiring explanation and disambiguation by actors in the scene. In the naturalistic mode of inquiry, these decisions come to be informed, as inquiry proceeds, by the accumulating data gathered from the site and by the questions and and analytic categories they progressively suggest. But they are also recurrently made on the basis of, and thus the accumulating data always reflect, the evaluator's perspective on what is important. It is in this sense that all inquiry and all inquiry-based description proceeds from some point of view: some theory of the phenomenon under study, of how it works, and (therefore) of what is important to look at in studying it. Ultimately,

> the theory of social organization entailed in description is embedded in the key terms and relations contained in the description; in the very nouns and adjectives one chooses as labels for the cast of characters (statuses), and in the verbs and adverbs one chooses as labels for the kinds of actions those characters perform together (roles). Such theory is also embedded in the descriptive syntax accounting for the sequence relationships among actions, in

> the points of functional climax or crisis identified in those sequences, and in the terms indicating standards for judgment of the social appropriateness of those actions (Erickson, 1978:5).

Thus, the theory of social organization and/or social relations that one implicitly or explicitly selects affects how one target's one's inquiry and structures one's account of the human endeavor of interest. It follows that:

> the problem is not the elimination of "bias" in description ...rather the problem is the selection of "bias" --or theoretical frame-- appropriate to the research problem at hand (Erickson, 1978:4)

The general research problem at hand in a naturalistic or qualitative evaluation is typically: (1) to identify certain aspects of locally situated social organization --actions and interactions which are, <u>from the actors' points of view</u>, routinely related in some way to the social program or other innovation to be evaluated, and (2) to understand, describe, and explain these actions in terms of the actors' social realities. A theory appropriate to this problem must be a theory of <u>how</u>, in general, members of social groups organize their activities in light of their perceptions and interpretations of the people, behaviors, and things in their world. Thus, it would provide a set of principles for determining where to look, what to look for, and (consequently) how to structure looking in order to identify and gain data on those locally situated systems of meaning, belief, value, and action that are functionally relevant to and constitutive of the particular program or innovation under study. Such a theory, then, would be a theory of social organization at an "intermediate" level of abstraction: one which lies somewhere between and links (a) the general

phenomenological proposition that people do indeed act in terms of the meaning that phenomena have for them and (b) a specific account of how persons in a particular setting do so.

It should now be clear why the absence of such a theory is significant in an evaluation that is intended to be naturalistic or qualitative. The naturalistic/qualitative inquirer is enjoined by evaluation methodologists to understand and explicate aspects of social life in light of the ways that participants in the setting understand and experience them, but in going into the field he or she has no system of constructs for defining and locating participants' realities or meanings: for determining what they are, where they are manifested or displayed, or how they function in relation to the daily activities in which participants are engaged. In such a situation, the identification of participants' social realities and notions of meaning becomes, at best, problematic. The evaluator cannot avoid making implicit and explicit choices about what to attend to and treat as data in the course of fieldwork. He/she cannot avoid decisions regarding what questions to ask now and next when on site. And ultimately, in framing an account of the program under study, he/she cannot avoid selecting among alternative ways of describing people, beliefs and values, actions and things, and how these function in relation to one another. In the absence of a general theory of social relations to help guide these decisions, the evaluator can only fall back on his/her own intuitive notions, on some body of research findings, on theory from some academic discipline (political science, economics, psychology, etc.) or

some combination of these. Whichever the case, the evaluator's inquiry and account becomes structured by the premises of the theory chosen, rather than in terms of the social realities understood and experienced by members of the group under study.* Then, the phenomenological foundation of the naturalistic/qualitative inquiry is undercut; it becomes mere, on-site data collection. The description and explication that emerge from such inquiry are invalid, for in naturalistic/qualitative inquiry valid description and explanation are those which in their vocabulary and syntax take account of and clarify the social realities in terms of which participants in the setting under study are acting (c.f., Erickson, 1978:7; Hymes, 1982:25ff.). This loss of validity is especially troubling in information that is intended as a basis for action, as is usually the case in an evaluation. If the account of the program or other endeavor under study does not accurately portray the world as participants know it --the systems of meaning, belief, value and action in which and with which they routinely operate, participants are very likely to reject the account as a basis for action. Alternatively, the consultation of such a report by others can lead to erroneous action: action which makes no sense in the world participants know, which functions in ways counter to decision makers' intents, etc.

* This is not to suggest that evaluation accounts must be written only in terms of the social realities and notions of meaning of the group under study. From an ethnographic perspective, however, the description and analysis of a program should at least describe and explicate the program from the perspective of participants' realities. Then, the evaluator can go on to present an analysis from another point of view, i.e., from the perspective of some social science theory that seems hueristically strong in light of the data.

None of these problems are eliminated by an effort to enter the study setting without preconception or bias. Nor can an evaluator or researcher ascertain participants' social realities or notions of meaning simply by asking rigorously opened-ended questions and observing in formally unstructured ways. The social meanings and social functions that kinds of persons, actions, words, and things routinely have for participants do not leap out of interview responses or from the stream of observed behavior. They are discernible in naturally occuring behavior, but only through some set of analytic operations, operations which are predicated upon some theory of how organized social life unfolds.

In summary, naturalistic/qualitative evaluation as it has been described to date lacks a theoretical perspective on how groups of persons order their social lives in terms of their social realities and notions of meaning and so assemble the everyday activities which are recognizable as "the program" and "program effects" that are the subject of inquiry. Because it is routinely directed by such a theory, I maintain, anthropological ethnography is a more powerful tool in those evaluations undertaken from a phenomenological perspective.

In the following pages, I offer support for this contention, presenting a theory of social organization based in anthropology and related disciplines and illustrating some of its implications for evaluation inquiry.

## A Constitutive Ethnographic Theory Of Social Organization

Anthropology is not a field with a single perspective on the ordering of human affairs. It embodies many different viewpoints on the nature of culture and social organization. I present only one of these here, one which is most closely tied to what has come to be called "constitutive ethnography" (Mehan, 1978; 1979; 1982). Other theories derived from ethnology (the body of knowledge on culture which is the theoretical foundation of anthropology) would suggest different directions for evaluation inquiry, but this one seems to be the most adequate one ofr describing and explicating the dynamics of social programs.

This theory has its foundations within the anthropological orientation usually called "cognitive anthropology," as well as in the related fields of sociolinguistics (or the ethnography of communication, e.g., Bauman and Scherzer, 1974; Gumperz and Hymes, 1972; Hymes, 1974) and ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967; Mehan and Wood, 1975). As I have indicated above, it is a theory of how group members generate and sustain organized social relations and of the role members' perceptions and interpretations of phenomena (their "realities") play in that process. As such, it includes a number of interrelated premises which elaborate the fundamental phenomenological axiom that persons act in terms of the meanings that persons, actions, and things have for them. I list and explain these premises first, ending with a description of social organizational process. Then I go on to consider the implications of this theory for evaluation inquiry.

Basic Theoretical Premises

A first, fundamental supposition of this theory is that organized social life is permitted by some set of operating principles, held more or less in common, for determining what behaviors and things mean. From the perspective of some "cognitive" anthropologists, these more-or-less shared operating principles comprise a group's culture. In Goodenough's (1964:367) terms:

> As I see it, a society's culture consists of whatever one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and to do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves.

Elsewhere, culture has been similarly defined by Goodenough (1971:41) as a "system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating and acting." From much the same perspective, Spradley (1972:29) has written of culture as founded in a set of cognitive rules: "...instructions for constructing, combining, interpreting, and otherwise dealing with symbols." From these "rules," Spradley suggests, are built cognitive maps (taxonomies or other classificatory schemes of kinds of people , things, social situations, etc., e.g., Cole, at al.,1971:51-91; Frake, 1964; Hage, 1972; Tyler, 1969) and also plans (cognitive "programs" for sequencing a series of operations over time; c.f., Miller, Galanter, and Pribram, 1960).

Sociolinguists see this same kind of sociocultural knowledge as the basis of a "speech community" (Gumperz, 1972; Hymes,1974:4ff.) --a group that holds in common not only a language, but also a body of rules for determining the social appropriateness and social meaning of various forms

of communicative forms of behavior. Similarly, ethnomethodologists maintain that members of a social unit make sense of others' behavior by employing shared (or presumed-to-be-shared, Cicourel, 1974a:34) "background understandings" (Garfinkel, 1967) and "interpretive procedures" (Cicourel, 1974:51ff. and passim; Mehan and Wood, 1975:98-115).

In short, some body of sociocultural knowledge lies at the foundation of and facilitates social life. In general, this knowledge can be conceptualized as a series of generative principles for making sense of the world and acting sensibly in it.

This initial premise begins to flesh out the notions of "reality" and "meaning" which are so important to phenomenologically based inquiry but so incompletely explained in works on naturalistic/qualitative evaluation. It should be apparent that the "realities" of primary interest to ethnographers are not those which abide idiosyncratically in particular individuals, but those of societal groups. Furthermore, these realities are not random or isolated bits of perception and interpretation; rather they are systemic in nature: coherent bodies of perception and belief, sets of standards for interpreting and acting, which recurrently and routinely guide group members' activities.

To reference the systematic bodies of sociocultural knowledge that members of a particular societal group use to organize their perceptions, interpretations, and actions, many anthropological ethnographers use the term emic, which they constrast with the term etic. In this dichotomy etic constructs or accounts consider phenomena from the point of view of standardized measurement ("or if not in terms of measurement at least in

terms of systematic ways in which scientists as external observors define units" Erickson, 1977:60). Emic constructs and accounts, on the other hand, are those of the ordinary actor in the setting under study. Erickson (1977:60) uses the concepts "stature" and "height" to illustrate the etic-emic distinction.At the same time, his remarks indicate the kinds of "systems of standards for perceiving believing, evaluating and acting" in which ethnographers are typically interested.

> In everyday interaction, for example, people may treat the phenomenally continuous variable of height as if it were discontinuous, categorizing people as short, average, and tall in stature. Units of stature, then, would be social facts, [i.e., emic categories] defined in terms of people's discriminations of thresholds and the actions they take toward each other on the basis of those discriminations. The continuous variable height could be measured formally by an arbitrarily defined unit such as the inch or millimeter, capable of reliable use by observors in making low-inference judgments. These units of description could be used in valid and reliable ways within a system of technical categorization independent from functional categories or discontinuous "chunks" used by people in thinking of stature...
> Modern anthropology, sociology, and linguistics have shown a great deal of variation among human groups in the emic discrimination and emic salience of physical and social phenomena. Researchers in these disciplines can state systematically what is emic in everyday events and how people take action with regard to the emic. From my point of view, this is what is qualitative about research -- statements of the quality of things and relations, descriptions of events in functional terms.

Put another way, anthropological ethnographers' interest in how persons in a group systematically order their social lives directs their attention to the emic categories (and ways of distinguishing among categories, e.g., of stature) that group members routinely employ and to the actions which members routinely take on the basis of these categories. Thus, the

"meaning" in which ethnographers are most interested is social meaning -- the functional significance that kinds of persons (statuses), actions, and things recurrently and rountinely have for group members, as manifested in the kinds of actions they routinely take with respect to them.*

A second theoretical premise further elaborates the fundamental notions of culture (or social reality) and meaning set forth above. This is the premise that a social group's standards for sensibly and appropriately interpreting phenomena, ascribing meaning and value, and choosing actions can vary with features of the social context or situation. Ways of discriminating stature, for example, can change dramatically from one social context to another. (Consider the thresholds of "tall" and "short" that come into play in choosing astronauts and those used in selecting college players in the professional basketball draft.) Similarly, ways of appropriately making sense of a particular form of behavior can vary from situation to situation. (A students raised hand may mean "I want the teacher's recognition" at one moment, "I volunteer to do a problem at the board" the next, and "I have an answer to that question" at still another.) Moreover, the very same way of behaving may be appropriate in one context and inappropriate in another just a second or two later,

* This does not mean that ethnographers are uninterested in the literal, referential meanings of words, gestures, etc. for persons in the group they are studying. (Hymes, 1982:25, for example, gives two excellent illustrations of the importance of knowing local lexicons.) Rather, the point here is that ethnographers' inquiry usually focuses on those aspects of meaning that go beyond the literal. It is what things mean in functional terms for societal members that claims primary attention in ethnography.

e.g., helping a friend solve a math problem just before the test; helping him or her after the test has begun.

The definition of social context (or social situation) intended here is a very specific one. As construed by ethnographers, especially constitutive ethnographers, context refers to an interpretation of "who we are and what we are doing now" which circumscribes or frames the set of alternatives from which participants in a social scene make their next choices about what to do socially "now" and "next" (Bateson, 1972; Cicourel, 1974b). Thus , contexts or situations may be nested one within another at various levels of interpretive generality. For example, a party in interaction may interpret the situation now as "a moment of misunderstanding in a casual social conversation with a colleague during a break between classes while at school when we first began to try out the new curriculum" --if he or she were to articulate an interpretation in so many words. Each level of contextual interpretation can entail reference to some distinct (but related) sets of sociocultural standards for appropriately interpreting others' behavior and selecting one's own actions.

When one joins the view of social context stated here with the definition of culture given above, it follows that "culture ceases to refer to a generic phenomenon of study and refers instead only to some level of that phenomenon" (Goodenough, 1975:4). That is, the culture of any society as a whole--its "macroculture"--is a broad level of organization integrating numerous situation-bound cultures:

> Every human being, then, lives in what is for him a multi-cultural world, in which he is aware of different sets of others to whom different cultural attributions must be made and different contexts in which the different cultures of which he is aware are operative. His competence in any one of these is indicated by his ability to interact effectively in its terms with others who are acknowledged as already competent (Goodenough, op. cit.).

In summary, culture (or social reality) is multi-layered. A societal systems of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting varies with features of the social context or situation --features which are themselves interpreted by group members at various hierarchical levels.

The perspective taken here runs counter to the widely held "folk" viewpoint that associates culture exclusively with groups of common geographic origin, i.e., with nationalities, ethnicities, localities, etc. It emphasizes that within a given geographical boundary --within a region, community, or school, for instance-- culture can be distributed such that some standards for perceiving, believing, acting, and evaluating are shared by all or nearly all; others, by many; and still others, only by members of certain sub-groups. At the same time, one might find that persons in widely separated sites share some features of culture. (One can make a case, for example, that there is a "teacher culture" and also a culture of schools, e.g., Sarason, 1971) Thus, if studying the "realities" of actors in a setting does not mean studying individuals' idiosyncratic viewpoints, neither does it mean taking for granted that all participants in a setting know and experience reality in identical ways. It encourages the ethnographer to look for salient emic contexts --those that participants in the setting under study routinely recognize and act on-- and to examine the

systems of standards for seeing the world and taking action in it that participants consistently, systematically draw upon in those contexts.

Implicit in the theoretical tenets presented thus far is another that deserves explicit mention: in the view taken here, the culture (or social reality) and behavior of a social group are in constant, dialectical relationship. In a process that goes on continuously in real time as group members conduct their everyday affairs, culture informs action and simultaneously action embodies and manifests culture. That is, as persons interact with one another, they draw upon and use their sociocultural knowledge --their notions of kinds of contexts, people, actions, and things; their systems of beliefs, ideas ,and values; their standards for interpreting others' behavior appropriately and choosing appropriate actions in context. And as they draw upon and use this sociocultural knowledge, their behavior becomes patterned in certain routine ways. Thus, patterns of behavior are constructed in interaction; and in the behavioral patternings that they routinely construct, group members display their sociocultural knowledge, projecting it (and the social meanings and views of reality that it entails) onto and into the world, making it available to others, and so generating and sustaining it.

It follows that culture is not purely subjective, not solely a cognitive or mental state existing only in people's heads. Nor is culture exclusively objective in nature; it is not only "patterns of behavior" existing "out there" in the world. Rather, from the perspective of the constitutive theory of social organization presented here, culture (or

social reality) is intersubjective: a social phenomenon not only in the sense that it is of or pertaining to society, but in the sense that it is by society, i.e., produced and maintained conjointly by group members. Put in Mehan's (1982:64) terms, the constitutive ethnographer treats culture as "intersubjective praxis (human productive and interpretive practices) instead of either a subjective state or an objective thing." Thus, it is appropriate to view

> ...the objective facts and subjective states associated with education, like those associated with other cultural domains, are interactional accomplishments. "Classroom organization," curricular programs," "teacher effectiveness," and other so-called "objective" aspects of schooling are intersubjective phenomenon, constructed in interaction. Similarly, "students' abilities," "students' intelligence," "teachers' styles," and other seemingly subjective states of individuals are intersubjective phenomena, displayed in interaction (Mehan, 1982:64).

A Theory of Social Organizational Process

Inherent in the premises explained above is a theoretical model of social organizational process. The model describes how such intersubjective features of social organization as educational programs are constructed or "accomplished" in interaction as participants draw upon and use their sociocultural knowledge (or, their socially generated and sustained conceptualizations of reality). I review this theoretical model below, then go on to explain some of its main implications for the design and conduct of evaluation inquiry.

Participants in face to face interaction perpetually scan the scene, taking in a plethora of perceptual "data" (Spradley, 1972). They routinely gather information on the time, location, and personnel present (Erickson,

1971; Goffman, 1974); and they attend to one another's actions. As McDermott (1976) has put it, persons in interaction become environments for each other. The behavior of all participants in the scene, enacted through many behavioral modes simultaneously, bears information for each other participant about the evolving definition and direction of the social situation at hand. Lexical, syntactical, and paralinguistic behaviors can carry meaning. So, too, can gaze direction, body orientation and posture, interpersonal distance, gestures, and so on. At any given moment, a person's behavior in all these channels can contribute to the total "message" he or she is seen as sending at that moment. (See Dorr-Bremme, 1982, for a comprehensive review of research supporting these points.)

Drawing upon upon socioculturally based systems of standards or background understandings of the type noted above, participants in the interaction encode, organize, and interpret the perceptual; data they are constantly receiving: they make sense of "who we are and what we are doing now" (Cicourel, 1974; Goffman, 1961; Mehan and Wood, 1975: 102-1060). But even given an adequate practical knowledge of sociocultural standards, what particular behaviors, objects, etc. mean in context is not unproblematic for participants. From an ethnomethodological perspective:

> all symbolic forms [rules, vocal utterances, gestures, actions, things in the setting] carry a fringe of incompleteness that must be filled in, and filled in differently every time (Mehan and Wood, 1975:90).

For example, in speech we never say all that we would be necessary and sufficient in order to be understood by a person who knew nothing about our social world. We assume knowledge on the part of others; we expect them to

be able to fill in around what we literally say in order to understand what we mean. To do this filling in, persons draw upon their sociocultural knowledge, their understandings--understandings that include more-or-less rough cognitive maps and plans of how the social world is organized; "facts" and assumptions about what things are, how they are related, etc.; as well as rules for behaving and making sense interactionally. But, because each person has had experiences of and in the world which are slightly different, because sociocultural knowledge is differentially distributed among members of a society (Gearing and Sangree, 1978; Wallace, 1970), and because the social context at the moment can be differentially "read" (e.g., Erickson, 1975), persons may each do the filling in differently than another would and differently than the speaker assume others will. (See Garfinkel, 1967:38ff. for additional explanation and illustration of this point.)

Thus, sociocultural standards (or understandings or rules) do not "tell" participants in social interaction how to make sense of others' behavior or what the situation is now; they do not "give°" persons interpretations of social phenomena. Social life is too fluid and varied to warrant such a construction. Rather, sociocultural rules, maps, and plans should be construed as a body of resources upon which participants creatively draw in making sense of what others are meaning by what they do.

Simultaneously, of course, as participants engage in this work of interpreting--attending to and making sense of the scene and others

emerging behavior--they themselves are also acting. As they interpret "who we are and what we are doing now" from moment to moment, they are perpetually determining how to act appropriately given their interpretations and given their social intents at the moment, i.e., what they hope to achieve by what they do. And they act perpetually on the basis of these determinations. Just as sociocultural standards do not tell persons the correct interpretation of others' behavior, they do not mandate what, specifically, is appropriate for a person to do at a particular moment in interaction.

As Cazden (1974) suggests, interaction is ordered along two basic dimensions. It is ordered sequentially across time in relationship to actors' social intents and the ongoing stream of activity in which actors are engaged. This Cazden refers to as the "syntagmatic" dimension of interaction. (Thus, one can speak of syntagmatic rules or rules of "horizontal co-occurrence," Ervin-Tripp, 1972.) Along this dimension, at particular syntagmatic moments, participants have options for the ways that they can appropriately express their intentions. Those options constitute the paradigmatic dimension of social interaction. (Thus, one can also speak of paradigmatic rules, or rules of vertical co-occurrence and alternation, Ervin-Tripp, 1972.) In the flow of social life, then, persons constantly choose among appropriate alternative ways of realizing their social intents. Making those choices in ways that will from their point of view (based upon their sociocultural understandings) communicate the subtleties of their social perceptions and intentions at the moment is part

of the creative activity in which participants in social exchanges routinely engage.

To summarize the theory of social interaction presented here: participants actively and creatively assemble social events in an ad hoc way. Drawing upon sociocultural rules, maps, and plans, they perpetually interpret the event as new perceptual data are generated through others actions. And they act perpetually on the basis of their interpretations, selecting among the options for behaving that their interpretations of the situation and of the relevant situational rules suggest are appropriate at the moment, given their social intents. In short, they are contributing to the event that they are interpreting and doing so on the basis of their interpretations of it. They are mutually informing one another, through their on-going behavior, of the definition and purposes of the event they are creating. All participants in a scene are simultaneously engaged in this "cybernetic" interactional work. And collectively, through this work, they are accomplishing a social event.

**Some Implications For The Design And Conduct Of Evaluation Inquiry**

My claim in introducing the theory just presented was that it provided a link between the phenomenologiocal perspective and the field method of anthropological ethnography --a link that is missing in descriptions of naturalistic/qualitative apporaches to evaluation. I suggested that such a theory would help to assure the descriptive validity of evaluation field studies: that it would provide a set of principles for

determining where to look, what to look for, and how to structure looking in order to identify and gain data on those locally situated systems of meaning, belief, value, and action that are constitutive of and/or functionally relevant to the particular program or innovation to be evaluated. Now, it is appropriate to explain some of these methodological principles. As I do so below, I assume that the general goal of field study in evaluation is a descriptive-analytic one, i.e., to understand, describe, and explicate the program to be evaluated in terms of participants' social realities. From the perspective of the constitutive ethnographic theory of social organization, this goal can be restated as follows: to describe how the program in question is socially organized, specifying the cultural machinery that generates that organization (c.f., Mehan, 1982:59-60).

A First Principle: Emphasis on Ethnographic Observation

Ethnographic evaluation inquiry designed in light of the constitutive theory set out above would allocate resources such that ethnographic observation took precedence over interviewing. This is a departure from what advocates of naturalistic/qualitative evaluation generally recommend in that: (1) the latter place equal emphasis on interviewing and observing, suggesting that interviewing is especially important for getting at program participants' realities and notions of meaning; (this follows from their tendency to treat realities and meaning as subjective states that lie only in the minds of participants); and (2) ethnographic observation entails a

kind of noticing or attending that seems absent in the naturalistic/qualitative evaluators' descriptions of observing. Let us see how the theory above leads to these departures.

The constitutive theory of social organization posits that as persons proceed through their daily social lives, they interpret the context from moment to moment: they continually make sense of "who we are and what we are doing now." And as they do they routinely select their current and next actions in light of the context as they have interpreted it, within the parameters of their sociocultural standards of appropriateness. This process goes on during interviews as it does during other social occasions. Interview respondents make sense of the situation: they draw upon their sociocultural knowledge to arrive at interpretatiuons of such matters as the social identity of the interviewer (what "kind of a person" she/he is), his/her purposes for coming here, why he/she wants to interview me, what social rights and obligations the interviewer and I have with regard to one another in general and in this situation, and so on. As the interview itself unfolds, these and similar matters are the subject of continual interactional negotiation between researcher and respondent as they "read" one another's fact-to-face behavior (Cicourel, 1974; Erickson and Shultz, 1982).

Furthermore, the respondent is in the position of having to make sense of what, exactly, the interviewer wants to know. There are a great many ways of approaching and speaking about the aspects of one's personal knowledge and experience that appear to be indicated by even the simplest

and most straightforward question. And (the constitutive theory tells us) language, along with other symbolic forms, is indexical. The interviewer cannot possibly say all that she/he means in so many words; she/he must count on the respondent's ability as a culture member to fill in meanings sensibly around what he/she says. Thus, at any given moment the respondent must interpret how to carve up (or arrange) and present his/her knowledge and experience; and he/she must do so based upon his/her general interpretive understandings of who the researcher is as a kind of social person, what the researcher's project is about, why he/she has been chosen as a respondent, where the interview has been and where it appears to be headed, as well as in view of the wording of the particular query the interviewer has just posed.

In short, the interview places the respondent in a social context outside the flow of his everyday life and presents him or her with the task of producing, in this situation, talk about some aspect(s) of the program or other feature(s) of his/her daily affairs. What the interviewer receives, then, is not "facts" or even the respondent's perceptions of the facts. What the interviewer receives is a conjointly produced and situated account of some actions, thinking, or emotions. It is a conjointly produced account in that it is generated by the successive interactional moves of both respondent and interviewer. And it is a situated, or context-specific, account in that it is produced "here and now" within the successive frames of the respondents' moment-to-moment interpretations of what is going on and what that implies for his/her action choices. Whether

the beliefs and values and feelings, the perceptions and interpretations, described in this situation are in any way functionally relevant to the program is problematic. Whether they are depends upon whether the interviewee holds, experiences, and uses them in taking action in one or another of a variety of naturally occuring, everyday contexts. And all of this remains true regardless of how carefully worded and sequenced the interview questions are, how much affective "rapport" is established, and how "truthful" the respondent strives to be. As anthropologist Charles O. Frake (1980a:50) has succinctly put it:

> The problem with [respondents'] verbalized interpretations is not a difficulty in eliciting them but in locating what cues are being responded to [by the respondent] in formulating a particular interpretation.

This does not mean that an ethnographic evaluator operating from a constitutive theory of social organization would reject interviewing or would relegate interview accounts to the status of "mere talk." (I will discuss the role that interviewing can appropriately play a bit further on.) Rather, as Frake points out it mean that:

> Perhaps instead of trying to devise provocative questions and other instruments to persuade people to talk about things they do not ordinarily talk about in that way, we should take as a serious topic of investigation what people in fact talk about, or, better, what they are in fact doing when they talk. When we look at talk, we find that people do not so much ask and answer inquires; they propose, defend, and negotiate interpretations of what is happening. Because what is happening is what we are interested in explicating, these interpretations provide the key to underderstanding. Viewing informants not just as question-answers, but also as interpreters of their lives, provides not only a sounder perspective for handling problems of informant variability and reticence, but also a more realistic notion of the relation of cognitive systems to behavior (1980a:50).

The constitutive ethnographic evaluator, then, would place heavy emphasis on observation and, in observing and documenting, upon the talk that program participants do in naturally occuring circumstances. He/she would do so not because seing what is going on is more important than people's ideas and beliefs, values and interpretations. He/she would do so because the ideas, beliefs, values, and interpretations that people are using to generate what is going on, as well as their moment-to-moment sense of what is going on, are displayed in their everyday talk and actions. This follows from the premise that culture is intersubjective in nature. As Erickson (1978:6) has explained:

> The assumption is that people engaged in face-to-face interaction are constantly engaged in telling each other verbally and nonverbally what is going on, what the "rules" are, and what the context is -- and that careful analysis of their "telling" can elucidate their underlying purposes and rules of procedure. Statements of such regularities, then, would not be just an arbitrary construction of the researcher, but would actually make contact with the points of view of those involved in the action.

Observing with this assumption in mind is what I intended by the term ethnographic observation that I used in introducing this section. Observing ethnographically means keeping a weather eye (and ear) out for what people are "telling" one another as they interact about their sociocultural systems of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting; about their notions of kinds of people things, and social contexts; and about the situation-specific social meanings of actions. This kind of observing, it seems to me, entails a very different kind of noticing or attending than one would otherwise do, as well as to a

different way of thinking about what one has observed. The nature of these differences is difficult to formulate succinctly; but the fact that they exist is indicated by the fact that Frake, as recently as 1977, felt impelled to urge ethnographers to observe in this way. And to reiterate: this kind of ethnographic observation would be the fundamental method of a constitutive ethnographic evaluation.*

A Second Principle: Interviews to Guide and Explicate Observation

For the reasons set for above, interviewing in an evaluation oriented by the constitutive ethnographic theory of social organization would play an supplemental role. Most importantly, it would help to guide and explicate observation.

Interviews as a guide to observation. Interviews can guide the ethnographic evaluator's observations in two ways: (1) they can suggest where and when to observe; and (2) they can suggest issues and dynamics to attend to in observing.

Especially during the early stages of inquiry, interviewing can help the evaluator to locate the scenes in which, from participants' point of

* How to do the sort of ethnographic observing mentioned here is beyond the scope of this paper. The interested reader, however, will find some useful guidelines in the work of Erickson and Shultz (1977, 1982), Mehan (1979), Philips (1983), and Scheflen (1973, 1974), as well as in dissertations by Dorr-Bremme (1982) and McDermott (1976). Many of these studies are based on audiovisual documentation of interaction, but it is possible as research by Frake (1980b, 1980c) has shown, to learn to see with the naked eye and to document in field notes what participants are telling each other situationally about applicable cultural principles. The research assisted by audiovisual documents, however, provides the best foundation for the neophyte who wishes to learn, from a constitutive ethnographic perspective, what to look for and how to think about what one sees.

view, the program is routinely enacted. They can also help indicate which of these scenes participants construe as most central to their program efforts. Similarly, when interview respondents describe connections between program elements and other phenomena in their world, their remarks can direct observation to settings, scenes, and activities that might otherwise be deemed irrelevant to the program and its evaluation.*

Topics, themes, and issues worth attending to in observing can emerge from interviews both directly and indirectly. If, for example, interview respondents stated routinely and explicitly that an individual's "style of leadership" had significant bearing on the program and its effects, the ethnographic evaluator would probably want to pay special attention to that individual's patterns of interaction with other participants across a _____

* Interview information, of course, is not the only guide an ethnographic evaluator would use in deciding where and when to observe. What program participants say and do in naturally occuring circumstances can serve as another, and sometimes better, source of direction. As an example, school-site participants in one California program routinely informed evaluators that site council planning meetings were the main scenes of program activities. But observation of these meetings revealed that key planning decisions were routinely made prior to the meetings themselves in casual conversations among committee members. This suggested the need to "track" committee leaders through their daily rounds in order to identify how critical program decisions were actually reached.

variety of recurrent contexts and to examine the functional links between those patterns and subsequent events. Or again, suppose that sub-sets of participants offered systematically different views of which events were most essential to the program's enactment. Such a pattern in interview responses could imply that different groups within the setting held distinctly different interpretations of the program, differnt defintions of what the program is "all about." Observing with this possibility in mind, the evaluator could consider whether participants words and actions manifested these different perspectives and, if so, how their presence influenced the program's performance. Patterns in respondents' accounts of the program's history, its' influences on organizational procedures, its benefits and costs for participants and clients, and a range of similar issues can also indicate issues the evaluator should think about in observing and making sense of what is observed.

That interviewing can help indicate where and when to observe, as well as what to attend to in observing, is hardly a unique idea. The point here, however, is that from a constitutive-ethnographic perspective interview information can only serve as a guide --it cannot be treated as study data-- unless and until it is tied to phenomena which are observed in naturally occuring events and related functionally to the program. This follows from the ethnographer's interest in the functional relationships among aspects of participants' culture(s) and program activities and from the view of interview remarks as situated accounts.

Interviews to explicate what is observed. This second major role interviewing can play in a constitutive-ethnographic evaluation is by far the more important. The constitutive ethnographer, as noted earlier, takes the position that group members display their sociocultural standards (or social realities) in interaction: they continually inform one another in their verbal and nonverbal behavior about trheir situation-specific social purposes and about "what is going on now, what the 'rules' are, and what the context is" (Erickson, 1978:6). Nevertheless, everything that is going on from participants' perspectives cannot be taken as unequivocally apparent in their interaction. In any case, the constitutive ethnographer wants to check his behavior-based analyses with those doing the acting in order to approximate an emic description of the action observed. Thus, the greatest part of the constitutive-ethnographic evaluator's interviewing would be undertaken to elicit participants' descriptions and explanations of the program-relevant interactions in which they routinely engaged. A usual strategy for obtaining such information is to ask people to talk about what they are doing as they are doing it or as soon as possible thereafter.Often, too, constitutive ethnographers use an audiovisual record of an event to help participants recall during interviews what they were doing and thinking during the interaction recorded (e.g., Dorr-Bremme, 1982; Erickson and Shultz, 1982). The ethnographer assumes that bringing the interview to the naturally occuring interactional scene (or, in the latter case, bringing the interactional scene to the interview) helps

provide access to the beliefs, values, and ideas; the context-specific rules for interpretation and action, etc. that participants were actually using to construct the observed event. The goal is not only to capture participants' interpretations and intents while they are still fresh in participants' minds. More importantly, it is to help the respondent sustain the naturally occuring context as the salient interpretive frame: to facilitate the respondent's ability to report on action and thought in terms of the everyday interactional scene rather than in terms of the interview context.

A Third Principle: Use of Ethnographic Rules of Evidence

Most works on naturalistic/qualitative evaluation enjoin investigators to search inductively for "patterns, themes, and categories" in their data (Patton, 1980:306). In the naturalistic or qualitative paradigm, these "recurring regularities in sources" (Guba and Lincoln, 1981:93) indicate directions for on-going inquiry and, in final analysis of the data, constitute findings. The nature of the patterns that evaluators should seek, however, is described rather incompletely in most recent writing on naturalistic/qualitative evaluation. Usually, examples of patterns and categories from actual evaluation data are given, and the investigator is advised to look for ideas, actions, words and phrases that recur and seem logically to dovetail.

Anthropological ethnographers also seek patterns in this way as they conduct inquiry and review their data. But ethnographers, particularly constitutive ethnographers, can usually be more specific about the kinds of

patterns that count as evidence. Fundamentally, they seek patterns of co-occurrence among phenomena --patterns which display the system(s) of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating and acting which group members are using in situ to organize their affairs.

When phenomena routinely occur together at a particular moment in time and function conjointly, they are described as in vertical co-occurrence. When they recur consistently together in sequence and function in relation to one another, they are said to be horizontal co-occurrence. Patterns of vertical and horizontal co-occurrence display the cultural knowledge and practices through which participants organize their lives at a variety of hierarchical levels. Some display the very small or brief contexts that participants recognize, the social meanings particular behaviors have in those contexts, and the rules for selecting and interpreting actions appropriately that are applicable in them. For instance, in a study of face-to-face communication in dyadic counseling interviews, Erickson (1979) found that among White persons a speaker's simultaneous production of a clause terminal juncture, moderately falling intonation, and a glance toward the listener routinely meant "I want to know if you are attending to and following what I am saying." In other words, the vertical co-occurrence of these behaviors meant that the listener was expected to give some listening response "now." This emic social meaning was evident in the routine (horizontal or sequential) co-occurrence of such a response in the form of a vocalized "mmhmm" or "yeah," a head nod, etc. That such forms of behavior as these in fact

functioned as listening responses (i.e., meant socially "I'm following what you're saying") was revealed in what the speakers regularly did next (another pattern of horizontal co-occurrence). Recognizing a listening response in the behavior of the listener, speakers routinely went on to the next speaking point. Failing to receive such a response, speakers consistently persisted at their point, reiterating the same idea in progressively simplified and concrete ways until the listener enacted some form of listening behavior.*

The latter example deals with some very fine-grained bits of social organization that are evident in patterns of behavioral co-occurrence: the situated social meanings of certain behavior forms, the generation of some very brief contexts (kinds of moments in conversation), and some rules for interpreting others' behavior appropriately and selecting appropriate actions oneself. Small patternings such as these, the constitutive theory suggests, are interwoven such that they constitute "larger" or more encompassing social organizational units. Broader, more enduring contexts, for example, are generated and sustained through (and recognizable to the observor in) the patterns of posture and orientation that interactional participants take and hold, as well as in the organization of talk that co-occur with these "positionings." (Dorr-Bremme, 1982; Erickson and

* This can seem an obvious or trivial finding until one considers that Black and White participants in Erickson's study employed entirely different sets of rules for signaling listening-response-relevant moments and for indicating listening. As a consequence, White speakers most often ended up explaining points over and over again to Blacks who were in fact listening and understanding, and Blacks in turn felt that Whites were "talking down" to them in demeaning ways.

Shultz, 1981; McDermott, 1976; Scheflen, 1973) Shifts in these patterns regularly co-occur with one another and with participants' post hoc interpretations of "when the context changed." Even more encompassing co-occurrence patterns display hierarchically higher levels of social organization. An ethnographic inquiry by Mehan (1983), for instance, identified the patterning of the special-education referral process in a school district. (See Figure 1, next page.) Notice that the pattern of activity depicted in the figure in fact embodies a number of more specific ones, e.g., the patterns which routinely constitute the processes of referral, assessment, consideration of placement, and so on. (These are only suggested in this diagram; Mehan has described them elsewhere.) In identifying and explicating how these patterns are generated, Mehan has provided an account of the P.L. 94-142 decision making process across several "nested" levels of social organization within the school district he studied.

Co-occurrence relationships, as noted, appear in routine behavioral patternings, but they are also sometimes indicated when interactional participants: (a) call for or offer an account of some behavior or set of behaviors, or (b) positively or negatively sanction certain behaviors.

When participants account for or make accountable the absence of some behavior or combination of behaviors, the observor can infer that there is a "rule" for its occurrence in the place where it is missed (Mehan and Wood, 1975:132-134; Schegloff, 1972). This principal is apparent in everyday remarks such as, "I called you; why didn't you answer? Are you mad

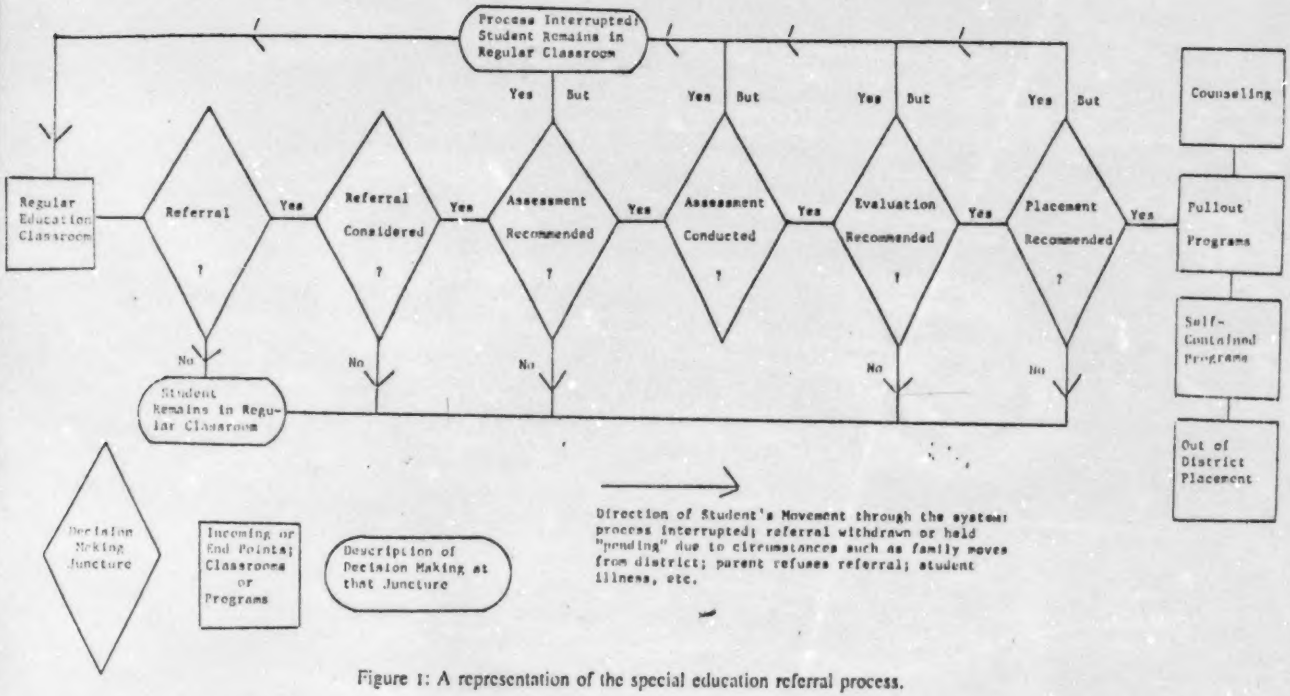
Process Interrupted; Student Remains in Regular Classroom
Regular Education Classroom
Referral ?
Referral Considered ?
Assessment Recommended ?
Assessment Conducted ?
Evaluation Recommended ?
Placement Recommended ?
Yes
But
No
Student Remains in Regular Classroom
Counseling
Pullout Programs
Self-Contained Programs
Out of District Placement
Decision Making Juncture
Incoming or End Points; Classrooms or Programs
Description of Decision Making at that Juncture
Direction of Student's Movement through the system: process interrupted; referral withdrawn or held "pending" due to circumstances such as family moves from district; parent refuses referral; student illness, etc.

Figure 1: A representation of the special education referral process.



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at me?" Similarly, one program participant asking another something like "Why didn't you assess his psychomotor skills?" can call attention to the rules of normal procedure in "cases such as this one." The evidentiary principle based on accountable absences is merely a corollary of the co-occurrence principle. In unfamilar settings, however, it can often prove useful in calling attention to previously unnoticed rules.

The same is true for participants' positive and negative sanctions. Participants who enact these are telling others in the scene (and the evaluator as well) what the rules of appropriate procedure are here and now. Classroom scenes are replete with instances of positive and negative sanctions, many of which include explicit formulations of appropriate rules: e.g., "Look up here, please. Now's the time to be listening to me, not talking to your neighbor." Instances are also readily available in routine program interactions: "This is the kind of report that the superintendent wants to see!"; "They sent back our application; we didn't fill in the budget information correctly." Notice that from this point of view what at first appear to be "unsanctioned violations" of the rules can serve to indicate the rules that are actually in use. State law or administrative mandates may "require" certain budget information, but if the absence of that information passes without notice or negative sanction, that requirement is not a functioning part of the program-as-enacted.

Together with the principle of co-occurrence and the principle of accountable absence, this principle of positive and negative sanctions stands as an evidentiary principle used in constitutive-ethnographic inquiry.

In summary, patterns of co-occurrence are the main evidentiary base of constitutive ethnographic accounts. These patterns are reconizable in the behaviors which routinely "go together" at particular kinds of moments in time and those that routinely follow one another in sequence through time and which are functionally relevant to one another and (thus) to the social event in question and the program as a whole. Once again, the functional relevance proviso is a key one. It differentiates the ethnographer's concept of co-occurrence from the statistician's concept of correlation. The functional relevance of a specific behavior or set of behaviors is apparent interactionally: what happens next when the behavior is present is systematically different than what happens next when the action is absent.* From this perspective, "deviant" or "discrepent" cases --cases that do not fit the pattern apparent in most comparable instances-- are not treated as "unexplained variance" as they are when correlational methods are employed. Rather, as Mehan (1979:105) points out:

> When action takes place that seems to violate the rules, but participants do not mark the violations, it means the data has not been described adequately.

Apparently discrepent cases, then, are taken as a cause for further inquiry and/or analysis.

A Fourth Principle: Treatment of the Program's Definition and Boundaries as Problematic

Oriented by the constitutive theory of social relations, an ethnographer embarking on evaluation inquiry would treat the definition and

* As an example, consider Erickson's (1979) finding regarding what speakers do next in the presence or absence of a listening response.

boundaries of the program to be studied as problematic. He or she would make participants' interpretations of "the program" a central matter during inquiry.

There are several elements of the constitutive theory which motivate this principle of inquiry design. First and most basically, the constitutive theory assumes that participants in social endeavors take action in light of their interpretations of "who we are and what we are doing now" at several hierarchical levels, e.g., at this moment in this situation in this event during this phase of this program. It follows that as participants go about addressing the program, their interpretations of the program's rationale, goals, emphases, requirements and optional features, etc., will influence their sense of what is going on and of what role they are expected to assume at the moment. These interpretations, then, will influence participants' action choices and so the program's overall enactment. Thus, from a constitutive ethnographic perspective, participants' interpretations of the program are likely to be a main factor in how the program is actually shaped at particular sites.

Second, that participants must interpret the program is taken as given from the viewpoint of the constitutive theory. It is true that nearly every program is defined and explained in a variety of documents: enabling legislation, administrative guidelines, "how-to" booklets, curriculum objectives and materials, and/or others. In addition, participants at local sites can usually gain further information on

particular programs in face-to-face briefings with experts of various kinds. But as is the case with all symbolic forms, the language of these sources is indexical, inherently incomplete.* None of them is, nor are all collectively, a complete script for assembling and maintaining the program from moment to moment. Those who are to enact the program as part of their daily lives, therefore, must draw upon their cultural knowledge and personal experience in order to determine, first, which available documents and which briefings merit greatest attention and, next, exactly what the words they contain mean for action "here and now."**

The constitutive ethnographer, then, would treat definitions of the program inherent in documents, in briefings by program experts, and in the interview accounts of particioants as situated, indexical, and open to interpretation as part of the normal, natural course of social affairs. He or she would approach these accounts as data. In so doing, his or her primary interest would not be in whether participants' at a particular site had arrived at a "correct" understanding of the program. Instead, the constitutive ethnographer would be concerned with how the interpretation(s)

* The concept of indexicality is defined and explained on pages 26-27 above.

** Dorr-Bremme, et al., 1979, offer a detailed description of how the documents and briefings provided in definition and support of one program offered very different definitions of that program at various moments in time (e.g., in the same year) as well as through time (from one year to another). This account also analyzes some systematically different ways in which the same program was interpreted and enacted at various schools sites.

apparent at this site had been achieved and how they functioned in the program's enactment. Furthermore, he or she would seek local interpretations of the program in situated interaction, turning to interviews only as a way of obtaining elaboration on what was observed. And recognizing the reciprocal, "reflexive" nature of participants' interpretations and actions, the constitutive ethnographer would consider participants' interpretations of the program and their enactments of it as likely to be dynamic, rather than static. Thus, he/she would keep an eye out for evolution in participants' conceptualization and performance of the program over time.

A Fifth Principle: Inquiry Centered on Interactional Events

This is a principle of specific inquiry tactics. It entails guidelines for sequencing and focusing inquiry during the course of an evaluation.

From the perspective of the constitutive theory, social life is organized at various hierarchical levels. The single communicative moves of individuals are juxtaposed in a variety of ordered ways in interactional exchanges (e.g., questions and answers, conversational "points" and listening responses). Exchanges are strung together in sequences that comprise social situations within events or occasions (e.g., the elicitation-response-evaluation sequences that comprise teaching interactions, Dorr-Bremme, 1982; Mehan, 1979). Sets of sequences, organized in certain ways, constitute recognizable kinds of social events --legislative sessions, phone calls, meetings, classroom lessons, other

"service-delivery" transactions. Ultimately, sets of events enacted simultaneously in various locations and sequenced in various ways constitute what comes to be glossed as "the program" itself. And to reiterate a key point: as persons carry out these interactions and sets of interactions and so "construct" or "accomplish" the program in question, they are drawing constantly upon their sociocultural knowledge. Their actions are based in their systems of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting; their "maps" of kind of people, actions, contexts, and things; their notions of the relationships that obtain among the latter, and so on.

Thus, as the ethnographer undertakes inquiry in the service of evaluation, he/she is faced with two fundamental questions: (1) What level of social organization should I concentrate upon in conducting my observation and interviewing? And (2) Aside from participants' interpretations of the program itself, what elements of paticipants' culture(s) (or social realities) should figure in my inquiry?

Constitutive ethnographers usually resolve both these questions by centering inquiry upon whole events then proceeding "up" and/or "down" to hierarchically higher and lower levels of social organization (and the aspects of culture they entail) in order to examine and explicate elements of culture that influence how the events taken as central are accomplished.

This tactic has two distinct advantages. First, "events" are salient for participants and readily locatable in their terms. Members of social groups usually have names for units of social life at this level of social organization: legislative briefing, parent advisory council meeting, staff development session, program review debriefing, etc. They can easily direct the inquirer to events of this sort, and they can offer general accounts of what they are "about." The boundaries of larger and smaller "chunks" of social life are often difficult for participants to identify and agree upon, and emic labels and descriptors for them are usually less precise than the investigator would like. Second, and more importantly, concentrating on events serves to focus inquiry at an "intermediate" level of social organization. As the investigator observes these events and interviews participants about them in the ways described above, she/he obtains information on which other aspects of culture and levels of social ordering seem functionally relevant to the events' enactment. He/she can then study these and explicate the relations of function.

An example will help clarify this process. In the evaluation of the California school program mentioned briefly above, observation focused upon site council planning meetings and upon informal decision-making encounters that routinely occured between these formal meetings. Parents were allocated seats on the site council at each school by law, and everyone concerned with the program interpreted "parent involvement" as a main program goal. Nevertheless, parents were rarely present during the informal encounters in which program decisions were substantially made, and

they played only a minor role in site council discussions. All this suggested the need to explore the general social organization of parent-school relationships, i.e., at a broader hierarchical level. It also suggested the need to examine the social organization of discourse at a more fine-grained level within the meetings, in order to understand how the role of parents and others in the event were situationally produced. Findings from the former line of inquiry illuminated how parents and staff members beliefs about societal roles became enacted in some broad institutional arrangements --arrangements that inadvertantly but systematically deterred parent involvement in the program. The latter line of sociolinguistic inquiry surfaced ways in which staff members' lexicons asnd interactional strategies during the formal meetings functioned (again inadvertantly) to discourage and subordinate the participation of those parents who did turn out for program meetings. Each set of findings had clear implications for program management and the delivery of program support services by the state education agency.

In summary, the general tactic in an evaluation field study following the constitutive theory would be to center inquiry on events and then to move outward from events as the data seem to dictate: either "up" to layers of culture and social organization in which the central events are embedded and/or "down" to levels of ordering within the event(s), tracing relationships of function across various levels.

## Summary And Conclusions

As is the case with naturalistic or qualitative approaches to inquiry, anthropological ethnography has its roots in phenomenology. In addition, it shares with the generic naturalistic/qualitative paradigm an inquiry method which is holistic, inductive, and interactive --one which includes both divergent and convergent phases in an on-going cycle of data collection and data analysis as the investigator him- or herself serves as the primary instrument of data collection. But as the generic naturalistic or qualitative approach (as elaborated in evaluation literature) does not, anthropological ethnography entails theory which elaborates the basic phenomenological premise that persons act on the basis of the meaning that actions and things have for them. I have described one such theory here and described how this theory provides a link between the phenomenological perspective and the field method of constitutive ethnographic inquiry. In so doing, I have suggested five broad methodological principles which an naturalistic/qualitative evaluation which was also a constitutive ethnographic evaluation would employ. Further, I have tried to make explicit the connections between these principles and the constitutive theory. My contention has been that an evaluation following principles such as these would have greater descriptive validity: it would be better able to provide a description and explication of the program in question in terms of prticipants' cultures or social realities.

Despite its length, the discussion presented here is only illustrative. Other theories of social organization founded in other

perspectives on culture and language use could be elaborated; these would have slightly different implications for the conduct of evaluation field inquiry. Other methodological principles could be drawn even from the constitutive theory presented here. The purpose of this paper, then, has been (1) to suggest that some theory of social organization is inherent in any naturalistic/qualitative description and analysis; and, (2) to point out how a more adequate theory, based in empirical work, can help to bring natualistic/qualitative description and analysis closer to the social realities and notions of meaning which participants actually use in assembling the program under study.

In concluding, I turn to the issue implied in the title of the paper: the goodness of fit between anthropological ethnography and evaluation. What role, if any, can ethnography of the type I have outlined above play in evaluation practice? To a certain extent, this question can be answered by saying that an ethnography can serve all the purposes in evaluation that are routinely claimed for naturalistic/qualitative apporaches in general. It is generally pointed out, for example, that naturalistic/qualitative inquiry is more compatible with such evaluation models as the goal-free model of Scriven (1972), the responsive evaluation model advocated by Stake (1975), and the illuminative model of Parlett and Hamilton (1976). For the same reasons (see Patton, 1980, and Guba, 1978 for their explication), ethnographic inquiry is also more consonant with these models. Like naturalistic/qualitative approaches, too, ethnographic inquiry can be especially useful when the evaluation is centered on program

activities and processes and/or oriented to the multiple values and information needs of various audiences. Similarly, an ethnographic method is appropriate when the purpose of evaluation is to refine and improve the enactment of a program, to increase the effectiveness of its management, and/or to examine its implementation or adaptatiion in particular localities.

The advantages of ethnography for the purposes are those of naturalistic or qualitative inquiry in general. These include richly detailed description and holistic explanation of program processes and outcomes which are portrayed as they occur amidst real world complexities. They also include the ability of the field study method to surface program effects and influences that are missed in evaluations oriented by psychometric premises and experimental or quasi-experimental designs (Dorr-Bremme, in press). But, following principles such as those set out above, an ethnographic inquiry can exceed a generic qualitative-naturalistic one in portraying program processes and effects more fully in terms of participants' ways of understanding and experiencing reality. This, as noted earlier, can enable program managers and sponsors to act on the evaluation in ways that closely take into account and respond to the needs, concerns, and viewpoints of participants in local settings.

On the other hand, following an ethnographic approach to inquiry can exacerbate the disadvantages of naturalistic/qualitative methods generally. Its emphasis upon observation and its de-emphasis upon widespread interviewing, for instance, makes in even more labor-intensive

(and thus more expensive) than most generic naturalistic/qualitative field studies. And for reasons inherent in the principles described above, an ethnographic evaluation can consume much more time in data collection, analysis, and writing than fieldwork oriented by other theories. An ethnographic evaluation, then, can be especially impractical in circumstances when evaluation information is required in a short time.

These practical disadvantages, however, do not preclude the use of anthropological ethnography in evaluation. Clearly, it can be an effective inquiry tool in studies of programs of limited scope. Even when time or monetary resources are limited, focused ethnography can be conducted in highly selected contexts in order to illuminate critical program processes. And trained ethnographers operating from a constitutive (or similar anthropological) theory can often generate useful information even when the number of inquiry cycles is restricted to a few. Even when the number of inquiry cycles is restricted by resources to a few, trained ethnographers can provide more useful, formative information than evaluators who select their theories of social organziation ad hoc. Ethnographic ways of looking and thinking about what one sees can enable the ethnographer to be more sensitive to, and so more accurate in gathering impressions about, the functional interrelationships among culture and action. Finally, the use of ethnography in evaluation can contribute substantially to the gradual, cumulative understanding of the factors and dynamics that influence the enactment and effects of various kinds of programs and policies in various types of institutional environments. In

this way, its use can help in the development of general, grounded theories of program implementation and institutional change.

In summary, anthropological ethnography does have a place in evaluation. It can perform those tasks that evaluators have come to identify for naturalistic/qualitative methods in general, and it can lend evaluators a variety of grounded theories of social relations that can serve to help maintain the descriptive validity of the accounts that they produce.

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